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## Water and God

Fr. Randy Roche

*Loyola Marymount University*

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## Water and God

We appreciate water in small amounts, for drinking or for watering plants. Too much water can cause harm: floods that destroy property and drown people. We need water, regularly; without water we die. Water can bear harmful minerals that destroy crops or cause cancers and other life-threatening illnesses in humans. Water can also contain trace elements that are necessary for life. We use water. We do not create water.

At times, we have control over at least some aspects of water. We can determine for ourselves whether or not to drink it or to use it. Water can be used for good or for ill, to slake our thirst, or to torture prisoners; we can rinse fruit and vegetables with water, and we can ruin electronic equipment with it. Sometimes we have no power over the availability of water, as exemplified by people who live in countries with polluted drinking water or who dwell on land stricken by severe drought. In creating us as those dependent upon water, God gives us an immediate reason for cooperating with one another on protecting the sources of water, and gathering, storing, and distributing it.

When water freezes, it expands and floats; it does not contract and sink, as do most liquids when they freeze. If ice sank to the bottom of seas and rivers and lakes, it would never melt, and the life cycle that sustains us would end. Floating, as it does, permits aquatic life to continue beneath the insulating blanket of ice, and the liquid water that remains on the earth affects the world-wide movements of weather, and life-supporting rain. Water is a good example of the creativity of the Creator.

When we pray before eating a meal, we acknowledge implicitly that God's gift of water nurtured and made possible both the food we eat and whatever we drink. Giving thanks to God for water arises readily in those who know that God loves them. First, we have the experience of the gifts, then the realization that the Giver loves us, and finally gratitude for the gifts. The process is like having a healthy body, where bone marrow produces red blood cells. We can then consider, with St. Francis, some of the many ways that water serves us, or has this day served us, and express our gratitude to God. In so doing, one of the purposes of water that is not chemical or physical is fulfilled: water and spirit are mixed together in us, through gratitude, just as the Gospel of John says of Jesus Christ: that he baptizes not just with water, but water and Spirit. Think about it.

When we look at what Jesus does for us, we are often led to recognize the love that motivates his willingness to suffer even death, to show us that God, in humans, need not fear death as the worst thing that can happen. The worst thing that can happen is for us to choose death - not to turn the water of love into the blood which moves us to act on behalf of others.

If we can think of any experiences of being loved, from first memories, up to the present, we have the basic requirements in place for giving thanks to God. It is like

And God chose water for some symbols that are as life-giving as water is to most life: baptism.

Not everyone is loved equally by fellow humans. God loves each of us uniquely. And most of us have direct experiences of God loving us. But most of us need to have, and to recognize, experiences of human love if we are to recognize God's love. The insight when we accept it, that we are loved, enables us to love others. It is almost as though the body has to recognize healthy, useful water, before it can make blood. The body cannot make blood out of poisonous chemicals.